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Operational activities for development: triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system for development

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Analysis of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192

Summary

The present addendum complements the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system for development (A/56/320) and contains the assessment of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192. It is complemented by the reports of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the multi-year funding frameworks and the evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (A/56/70-E/2001/58), on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 1999 (A/56/70/Add.1-E/2001/58/Add.1) and the preliminary report on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for the year 2000 (A/56/70/Add.2).

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Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	3
II.	The changing context and challenges	2–10	3
III.	Resources and funding	11–22	6
IV.	Intergovernmental oversight of operational activities	23–31	8
V.	Strategic frameworks and programming	32–53	10
VI.	Impact evaluation of operational activities: capacity-building and poverty eradication	54–65	14
VII.	Field-level coordination	66–136	17
	A. Simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures	66–88	17
	B. Strengthening the resident coordinator system	89–97	21
	C. Common premises and sharing of administrative services	98–106	23
	D. Monitoring and evaluation	107–115	27
	E. Field structure	116–117	29
	F. Involvement of specialized agencies	118–121	29
	G. Cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund	122–128	30
	H. Cooperation with regional development banks	129–136	31
VIII.	Evolving dimensions of operational activities	137–183	32
	A. Humanitarian assistance, peace-building and development	137–146	32
	B. Human rights, including the right to development	147–153	33
	C. Information and communication technologies	154–162	34
	D. Gender in development	163–171	36
	E. Regional dimensions	172–180	38
	F. Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries	181–183	40

Tables

1.	Status of harmonization of programming cycles, as of March 2001	18
2.	Importance of improvements in the opinion of the resident coordinator system	20
3.	Establishment of common premises/United Nations houses, 1996-2000	24
4.	Percentage of common or shared main administrative services achieved by United Nations country teams	25
5.	Time frames established by United Nations country teams to achieve full common administrative services	26

I. Introduction

1. The present addendum contains the results of a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998. It contains an update of the assessment contained in the interim report (E/2001/66), which was considered by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001. To ensure accuracy and broad coverage of the assessment, reflecting the views of all the principal partners, this analysis is mainly based on replies to questionnaires received[1] from 25 programme countries, 13 donor Governments, 24 organizations of the United Nations system, 110 resident coordinators and 22 programme/project managers of field activities supported by the United Nations system. It also draws upon impact evaluation missions on capacity-building and poverty eradication in six countries and an external evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. Finally, it takes into account the views expressed by Member States at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2001.

II. The changing context and challenges

2. The United Nations system continues to be viewed by many countries as a valued and indispensable partner and as a source of neutral and objective assistance and advice. The new context of development cooperation, which has greatly changed over the past decade, poses new challenges to the United Nations operational activities. In particular:

(a) Globalization, driven by the forces of economic and financial integration and by the pervasive impact of information and communication technologies, is fundamentally changing the context and dynamics of development, offering new opportunities, but also posing new risks and challenges, particularly for developing countries;

(b) Global economic integration is shrinking the world, but a global sense of solidarity and shared destiny that it should engender has yet to take hold between the rich and the poor. Economies are becoming increasingly interlinked, yet prosperity remains a privilege for the few;

(c) Robust global economic growth over recent years has been accompanied by a significant increase in income inequalities within and among rich and poor countries. The number of people living in poverty continues to grow despite the fact that the means to eradicate poverty in a short time frame are within easy grasp in the world at large;

(d) The fiscal health of most major industrial nations has improved, but overall official development assistance (ODA) and multilateral development cooperation have been either stagnant or in decline;

(e) The framework and content of the development agenda have been enlarged and deepened, yet uneven and inadequate economic growth in the poorest countries remains a major obstacle to the attainment of this broader agenda. The primacy of people and participatory development have been emphasized, but their implementation through aid policies and performance is only slowly making progress;

(f) It is increasingly recognized that global problems cannot be solved only at the global level and national problems cannot be addressed successfully solely at the local level. A global-national interdependence has emerged. While support for national development remains central, the emergence of global concerns and a global context and approach has expanded the ambit of development cooperation and made its mission more complex, daunting and, with shrinking resources, even more difficult to attain. Sustainable development, sustained growth and poverty eradication have emerged as the intertwined purposes of development cooperation. At the same time, with increasing emphasis being placed on results and effectiveness of development cooperation, there is a growing demand for the measurement and monitoring of these results on a global scale;

(g) Along with human rights, the right to development is now widely accepted and a right-based approach to development is broadly pursued. The United Nations system is now being encouraged[2] to provide support to national efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization, once viewed as strictly a national endeavour;

(h) The concept of security is now seen to embrace economic and human dimensions. There has been a growing realization that sustainable development cannot be achieved without real peace, and vice versa. Human development is acknowledged to encompass economic growth, democratic governance and social equity;

(i) The way economic reform and structural adjustment is viewed has also evolved by articulating the concept of adjustment with a wider consideration of social dimensions;

(j) An expanding global agenda is coinciding — and sometimes colliding — with a growing but specific national agenda. While the United Nations development agenda has grown and widened, so have the needs and demands of developing countries in facing the new development challenges. They are diverse but specific, generic but specialized. The intersection of a broadening global agenda and diversified yet specific country demands compounds the complexity of United Nations development cooperation.

3. As a variety of channels and instruments for development cooperation is being used to a greater extent than in the past, the United Nations now has to operate in a more intensely competitive environment, with reduced real resources and with new partners, and must contribute to the achievement of time-bound targets.

Globalization

4. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) recognized globalization as "the central challenge we face today". A major task, and opportunity, for development cooperation will be to ensure that the adverse effects of globalization are remedied and its benefits are more equitably distributed. Many Governments are engaged in formulating appropriate public policies, both economic and social, to cope with the dynamics of globalization in the specific national context. The operational activities of the United Nations system can help by disseminating the experiences of other countries and through its advisory and upstream work in supporting appropriate policies.

Liberalization

5. Economic liberalization in developing countries has affected their external economic cooperation, injecting new development needs. Trade liberalization in the context of meeting World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments is a major concern of the Governments of these countries. While most recognize the potential benefits of a liberalized trade regime, they want to open their economies according to the context and condition of their societies and to determine the pace and manner of doing so. Most developing countries feel that their economies do not have the flexibility and adaptability to meet all the requirements of the international trade regime. There is growing concern that too rapid and across-the-board liberalization might destabilize their still fragile economies and disrupt economic growth. Countries are requesting the help and advice of the United Nations system in such areas as policy and structural change and institutional infrastructure-building. The demand and need for trade-related technical assistance and advice for capacity-building has increased and must be met.

New partners

6. While Governments remain indispensable to the delivery and success of United Nations development cooperation, the role of Governments in economic management is changing. Accordingly, and in conformity with the evolving role of Governments and within their structure, the United Nations, consonant with its broader agenda, is interacting with a broader range of constituencies than before, including autonomous governmental entities. National execution has brought United Nations development work closer to line ministries, as well as non-governmental organizations, as executing or implementing agencies.

7. In many countries, attempts are being made towards political and economic decentralization, opening up new partnership opportunities to the United Nations system. Provincial and local authorities are aspiring to be direct partners with international organizations. New and innovative patterns of partnership, financial as well as managerial, are being forged between the United Nations, federal governments, local governments, NGOs and the people. The Organization is assisting countries in democratic decentralization. Nearly 95 per cent of resident coordinators have identified decentralized development and participatory development as one of the emerging areas of United Nations assistance.

8. The intended beneficiary of that assistance should also be an integral partner in development cooperation, not only in its implementation but even more in its design and formulation. To avoid the pitfalls of patronage and pilferage and as a way of empowerment, the active participation of civil society in United Nations development cooperation has become increasingly important. These non-State actors include the private sector, NGOs, community-based organizations and the scientific and technological communities. There are many examples of initiatives, such as the global compact and other efforts, that establish alliances with non-governmental partners. As the reach and scope of United Nations partnership expands, the challenge, rigour, transparency and accountability standards should not be compromised.

Millennium Summit

9. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, together with global conferences, has defined a new context, setting new milestones and time-bound targets, such as the targets of reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by the year 2015 and achieving universal primary education by the same date. The greatest challenge is to translate these goals into action.

10. While the primary responsibility for the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration lies with Member States and the international community, it constitutes the principal mandate and challenge to the United Nations development system to assist Member Governments and add value to national efforts for the realization of these goals. The General Assembly has called upon the organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adapt their strategies and activities to take into account the follow-up to the Declaration and requested the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide coordination of its implementation. This imparts a greater sense of immediacy and import to the goals of major United Nations conferences and places a greater responsibility on the United Nations development system to play its part in fulfilling its potential as a key instrument for international development cooperation, ensuring that its support to recipient countries is integrated in national processes.

III. Resources and funding

11. The three essentials for effective development cooperation are sufficient, secure and stable financing; a dynamic institutional structure; and appropriate means of design and delivery. The reform process initiated in recent years by Governments and the Secretary-General touches on all three, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

12. Assured and adequate availability of financial resources is a prerequisite to meeting current and further challenges facing the United Nations system. A weak, unstable and uncertain financial base hampers the capacity of the system's development cooperation to meet these challenges. The financing of operational activities has long been on the intergovernmental agenda and has been a major preoccupation in the previous triennial reviews. An implied impetus behind the reform of United Nations development cooperation was that it would lead to more stable and substantial flows of funding by enhanced development resources. But the trends thus far have not been encouraging.

13. ODA itself is declining, reaching an all-time low of 0.22 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in 1997. It rose slightly to 0.24 per cent in 1999. International aid flows declined through the 1990s, before stabilizing slightly in the last two years of the decade. Per capita aid to Africa, for example, has tumbled from US$ 43 to $30 since the early 1980s, slicing by half in real terms. Wide disparities within traditional donors are becoming an impediment to aid. While some donors have exceeded the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP, others are lagging far behind, one at barely 0.1 per cent.

14. The share of multilateral organizations has thus far, in broad terms, kept pace with the overall reduction in ODA, usually at about 30 per cent of total ODA. Not only is aid in real terms declining or stagnating, but its impact and effectiveness are

also under closer scrutiny than before. One postulate is that aid is effective only in the context and in conjunction with good governance and high-quality economic management. Others fear that these constraints could lead to selectivity and open the way towards subjective and extraneous considerations. Generally, however, there is far greater awareness than before that aid effectiveness and impact cannot be separated from aid availability. Despite increasing evidence that development funding is a good investment, politically as well as economically, the constituency for multilateral aid in major industrial societies does not appear to be strong or vocal enough to help reverse the decline.

15. Funding for operational activities, particularly regular or core activities, remains far short of the critical mass necessary for achieving efficiency and effectiveness of programme delivery. The operations of funds and programmes in many countries are at levels far below those approved by their executive boards. Core funds and regular resources are indispensable for carrying out the approved development programme. The growing asymmetry between resources that are reliable and stable and those that are transient and exigent is not only distorting the programme priorities of United Nations development cooperation but also making efficient management of the programmes much more difficult. Lack of resources affects impact, leading to further cutbacks and eroding public and political support. This vicious cycle has to be broken by increasing core funding.

16. There is also a growing trend towards support to short-term emergency types of activities, to the detriment of long-term development. Contributions to the World Food Programme (WFP) illustrate this problem. Some two thirds of its resources are devoted to humanitarian assistance and only one third to longer-term development, reversing the proportion of some years ago. Some donors have informed WFP that they may have to further reduce their contributions to its development activities. While bridges are being built between short-term and long-term dimensions of development cooperation, donor preferences and accountability are important. They determine the disposition of such funding.

17. Aid channelled through the United Nations development system is still overwhelmingly dependent on a few developed countries. Efforts to broaden the donor base of United Nations voluntary funding to arrive at a more equitable burden-sharing of funding have not yet yielded significant results.

18. Over the past few years, the pattern of voluntary contributions has been the subject of considerable scrutiny. The voluntary character of funding has been based on a simple article of faith and premise: that development aid has a moral underpinning; that it will always have a strong enlightened political constituency; and that the flexibility of choosing how much to contribute will be linked to performance and lead to more, not less aid.

19. The progress towards achieving multi-year frameworks for funding operational activities had raised expectations of reversing the declining trend in core resources, which has yet to be realized. While more time is needed for an informed assessment, the mode and the momentum of multi-year contributions have to be sustained and strengthened to achieve the desired goal of a substantial increase in and sustained predictability of funding. This will be a major step forward as a strategic planning device, but its financial dividend remains uncertain (see A/56/70-E/2001/58).

20. What are in question are the United Nations country-level presence and programming and the ability to respond to individual country needs. As a consequence, not only its development work but also its advocacy profile in the field, relating to disadvantaged sectors, such as children and women, and life-saving activities such as vaccinations, support to local initiatives in child and maternal health, primary and pre-school education, clean water and sanitation, are in danger of a serious decline. Critical programmes and activities are drastically scaled down or put on indefinite hold in many countries in Africa and in other least developed countries. The trust and confidence of Governments and civil society in the ability of the United Nations to sustain its development programming are also at risk.

21. The fundamental policy — and political — question is this: is the combination of the growing role of other institutions and channels in development cooperation and diminishing United Nations funding an uncoordinated, if not unintended, coincidence inherent in the way Governments operate, or is it a conscious collective political choice of donor countries? In the words of the Secretary-General, must the United Nations confine itself to encouraging and coordinating studies on the theory of development?[3] Should the United Nations development role be confined to global consciousness-raising and advocacy and normative and standard-setting? Would such a role even be sustainable without the capital of confidence and trust that the United Nations has been able to build up over the decades, as a neutral and reliable source of assistance and advice to so many countries in their various stages of development?

22. Greater clarity and commitment are essential not only to place United Nations development cooperation on a sounder and more stable footing, but also for the efficient pursuit of the global development agenda. These questions have to be addressed at a high political level to overcome the perceptions and pitfalls that have prevented progress. One such forum is the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development, which will discuss the complex issues germane to financing development. A substantive policy discussion in the setting of the present review could provide a basis and points of reference for the Conference.

IV. Intergovernmental oversight of operational activities

23. Pivotal to the reform and renaissance of United Nations development cooperation is the strengthening of intergovernmental oversight, particularly of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. United Nations development cooperation is financed by Member States and is meant to add value and contribute to development in Member States. Governments determine policy through the General Assembly, provide coordinated oversight through the Economic and Social Council and manage the funds and programmes through executive boards. The interrelationship between these three intergovernmental bodies was defined by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/162 of 23 December 1994, which provided the legislative framework within which they discharge their respective responsibilities.

24. Over the past few years, this three-tier intergovernmental structure of oversight of United Nations operational activities has evolved in such a way that the General Assembly has performed its policy functions in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review. The executive boards provide intergovernmental

support to and supervision of the activities of the funds and programmes. Among other things, their functions include implementing the policies of the Assembly and the coordinated guidance of the Council and recommending new initiatives to the Council and through the Council to the Assembly, as necessary. Executive heads and boards are taking important decisions to optimize scarce resources to streamline and shift their programme coverage and on the focus and the nature of country interventions.

25. From the start, the role of the Council has been less clearly defined and carried out. More recently, however, the Council has provided clearer guidance by taking decisions on important cross-cutting issues, such as gender, capacity-building and poverty eradication. The Council also brings into play, under its aegis, policy makers from Governments, the executive heads, country teams and the agencies of the United Nations system with a view to enhancing the overall coordination and impact of operational activities of the system.

Annual reports to the Council of the heads of the United Nations funds and programmes

26. In paragraphs 1 and 2 of its resolution 1998/27 of 28 July 1998, the Economic and Social Council called on the executive boards to ensure that the heads of United Nations funds and programmes include in their annual reports to the Council a thorough analysis of problems encountered and lessons learned. This should enable the Council, when considering the annual reports, to identify specific problems, opportunities and issues/areas where it could provide system-wide cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance, making appropriate proposals, in order to perform its coordinating function.

27. Detailed information on the results of the consideration of the annual reports of the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes can be found in the relevant reports of the executive boards.

Concise consolidated list of issues

28. In its resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996, the General Assembly indicated that the guidance functions of the Council should be reinforced by giving attention to the objectives, priorities and strategies in the implementation of the policies formulated by the General Assembly, as well as concentrating on cross-cutting and coordination issues. In its resolution 1998/27 of 1998, the Council invited the Secretary-General to arrange for submission to the Council by the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, in consultation with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), of a concise consolidated list of issues which are central to the improved coordination of operational activities and on which the funds and programmes seek consideration by and guidance from the Council.

Joint and concurrent meetings of the executive boards

29. The Council, in paragraph 29 of its resolution 1999/6 of 23 July 1999, recommended that the practice of holding joint meetings of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council and the bureaux of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food

Programme should be continued, and requested the respective bureaux to report on the meetings to their governing bodies.

30. The 2001 session of the Joint Executive Board of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA had as its main topic the progress made with the use of common country assessment indicator frameworks and featured a presentation by the United Nations country team and the Vice-Chairman of the national planning commission from Nepal, focusing on the common country assessment and UNDAF experience in that country.

31. At the session, it was agreed that it was necessary for the common country assessment indicator frameworks to evolve to respond to new priorities spelled out in national plans, conference reviews and the United Nations Millennium Declaration and that continued international financial assistance and technical expertise were required. Developing new indicators would require building on best practices from previous experience, and should take advantage of greater country and regional participation.

V. Strategic frameworks and programming

32. The General Assembly has repeatedly called for greater coherence in development operations of the United Nations system. To this end, the main instruments are UNDAF and the common country assessment (CCA). The strategic framework and the consolidated appeal process are used for special situations. Other instruments, established by the Bretton Woods institutions, are the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

33. In response to a request by the General Assembly, an evaluation of UNDAF has been conducted (A/56/70-E/2001/58). Major findings are summarized here, looking at UNDAF as a means of promoting coherent programming, producing benefits to recipient countries and contributing to the coherence and effectiveness of the system's operations. This has also required assessing the common country assessment and linkages with the comprehensive development framework, PRSPs and sector-wide approaches.

34. UNDAF has been completed in 38 countries, is in progress in 31 others and is planned for 25 additional countries.[4] The introduction of the common country assessment has rapidly progressed over the past two years, as a necessary precondition to UNDAF. The common country assessment has been completed in 84 countries, is under preparation in 32 other countries and is planned in a further 8 countries.

Impact on recipient countries

35. The evaluation findings show that UNDAF provides recipient countries with a greater understanding of the system's role in development, providing a review of the system's approach to cooperation and identifying priority areas for action. As confirmed by government representatives of a few recipient countries where the process was launched, it can generate opportunities to address sensitive issues (human rights, internally displaced persons and alternative development strategies) when there is a forthright dialogue with national interlocutors. It can enhance the

integration of system programmes with national strategies when they are based on national priorities. In some countries where the Government was fully involved from the outset, the common country assessment and UNDAF have enhanced coordination among national stakeholders.

36. The common country assessment often provides a background reference to government, system organizations and other stakeholders and can be a powerful tool for policy dialogue, enhancing country-level monitoring of international goals and contributing to information-sharing. It opens the way to capacity-building in the areas of statistics and data analysis by identifying data gaps and constraints that require support for national statistical systems.[5] The common country assessment and UNDAF may play an important role in assisting developing countries in the follow-up and implementation of major United Nations conferences.

37. The evaluation shows that there is not enough factual evidence that UNDAF provides an input to national policy formulation through better development planning and policy design or through promoting more effective national coordination either of national development policies or of external assistance, nor is it always synchronized with national planning.

38. A thorough national participation from the outset in all phases of the common country assessment and UNDAF has been considered essential to ensure a positive impact on recipient countries, but so far results have been mixed. Sometimes the Government is fully engaged, but in other cases participation is limited to a formal consent or to comments on finished products. This is the case even to a greater extent for civil society organizations. When national involvement is limited, the capacity-building impact of the common country assessment is hardly evident. It is necessary to move forward in making use of these instruments, broadening their consistency both at the national level, within the host country, and with the donor community.

39. A major concern is the increase in "transaction costs" for both the countries and the system organizations that are associated with the preparation and monitoring of the common country assessment and UNDAF. The evaluation shows that both processes require the commitment of considerable resources, increased workload and skills, which represent additional costs that can only be justified if they enhance the effectiveness of United Nations development support, while reducing redundancy and duplication of work.

Impact on the United Nations system

40. The evaluation shows that UNDAF has produced substantial results in identifying common strategic priorities and established a framework for country programmes. The common country assessment and UNDAF have contributed to the development of a "system culture" as an important team-building mechanism, reinforcing the collective identity of the country teams through information-sharing and joint partnerships in designing a cooperation strategy. Decentralization and delegation of authority by most organizations have facilitated these effects. More intensive teamwork is seen in strategic programming around cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issues and system-wide concurrence, with respect to conference follow-up. The common country assessments have proved to be helpful in preparing UNDAFs and identifying common strategic directions. Some country representatives recognize that their respective agency headquarters or regional substructures are not

fully supportive of UNDAF, although the common country assessment and UNDAF have induced an increased participation of specialized agencies in coordinated analysis and strategic planning.

41. The common country assessment (especially the indicator framework) and UNDAF provide some support to the coordinated country-level conference follow-up, focusing on cross-cutting issues and challenges that the conference will have identified. The establishment of an indicator database for national priorities and conference follow-up is a major result of the common country assessment.

42. System participation in both common country assessment and UNDAF processes has reached significant levels but is uneven. There are concerns regarding the limited involvement of United Nations entities or agencies, including regional commissions, that are not directly represented in the country. The involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in the common country assessment and UNDAF, which is very effective in some cases, is not uniform in all countries. The new information technologies offer new opportunities to improve system efficiency and connectivity, enhancing cooperation in all directions between headquarters and field level.

43. A quality evaluation of the common country assessment and UNDAF does not lead to uniform conclusions. Technical quality is improving, but is uneven. Documents are often vague, lack specificity and do not specify targets, expected results and time lines for selected priority areas, or lack built-in monitoring. Some documents lack focus, are not founded on an adequate database, omit key development factors and do not cover all relevant sectors. The knowledge required to produce good common country assessments and UNDAFs may call for an improvement of the skill profile of the country teams and a greater use of the United Nations system's variety of expertise and perspectives that reflect different mandates of different organizations, in order to be able to respond more effectively to the diversified needs of programme countries under a common policy framework.

Common country assessment/UNDAF and country programming

44. Since the UNDAF process has only been in effect over the past four years and, in a number of countries, has only recently been completed, evidence of its impact on individual country programmes is still modest. Its influence on agency programming has so far produced mixed results. Small technical agencies do not recognize such an influence, but most system organizations (in particular, United Nations funds and programmes and large specialized agencies) are taking measures to incorporate UNDAF into their agency country programming.

45. UNDAF has created favourable conditions for joint programming, without altering the institutional separation among country programmes. Efforts have been multiplied to promote joint initiatives, programmes, mid-term reviews, evaluation efforts and services.

46. The common country assessment and UNDAF were expected to lower transactional costs through a "replacement effect", reducing procedural requirements for individual country programming. Some progress has been attained by funds and programmes, but preparations for country programmes still have separate requirements. Individual organizations and UNDG confirm that this area requires the highest priority. Currently, UNDG is promoting initiatives to streamline the

programme approval processes (A/56/70-E/2001/58, paras. 67 and 117). Nevertheless, there is no systematic evidence that the expected replacement is taking place at the system-wide level in all organizations.

Resources and technical support for CCA and UNDAF

47. Considerable technical support and resources were provided, in particular, through UNDG, to facilitate the introduction of UNDAF and the extended implementation of the common country assessment, including training initiatives. The external evaluation suggests that funding of the common country assessment and UNDAF should be further augmented and that the principle of cost-sharing should involve all participating organizations. There is no uniform position in the system with regard to the need for additional support to the common country assessment and UNDAF, since the resource constraint seems to be felt mostly by organizations that have difficulty in ensuring participation in the two processes.

48. There is some evidence of an uneven level of technical capacity in the country teams to support the common country assessment and UNDAF which would call for an improvement of the technical profile of the country teams. New skills not available within the country team may still be available within the system. The combined presence and support of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies suggest that the system has sufficient competence to address the requirements for an overall vision of development priorities and their various sector-wide dimensions. The problem is then how to ensure the provision of that expertise when it is not available within the country team. Again, the wider use of new information technologies may be useful.

Relations with other frameworks

49. The relations of UNDAF and the common country assessment with other frameworks require some attention either for their possible complementarity or for the risk of duplication. There is evidence of reciprocal participation of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the Bretton Woods institutions, on the other, in UNDAF and the common country assessment, as well as the Comprehensive Development Framework, PRSPs and sector-wide approaches. There is a need for rationalizing these processes and ensuring better sequencing. Work is in progress to facilitate the integration of UNDAF and the common country assessment with the Comprehensive Development Framework and PRSPs through a joint learning group.

50. The Comprehensive Development Framework principles are compatible with the concepts and guiding principles adopted for UNDAF and the common country assessment. However, their coverage may be different. CDF is more of an approach and a process, rather than a strategy for analysis and implementation. The common country assessment is an analytical tool, which could feed into the Comprehensive Development Framework where it exists, while UNDAF is the "business plan" of the United Nations system.

51. More attention has recently been given to the involvement of the system in the PRSP process. Since the United Nations system is already operating in several countries with initiatives that aim at poverty reduction, its interaction with PRSPs is of special relevance. There are concrete examples of close collaboration of the United Nations system in the PRSP process. Since the PRSP process has been

introduced only recently, its relations with UNDAF and the common country assessment are still at an initial stage.

52. UNDAF provides the basis for articulating a more coherent and unified United Nations system response to sector investment programmes and sector-wide approaches adopted by Governments. Sector-wide approaches are a vehicle for a broader application of the programme approach. The potential contribution of the common country assessment as an input to the preparation of sector-wide approaches has been underlined. Some reflection is required on the implications of the common country assessment and UNDAF for sector-specific work. The challenge of sector-wide approaches is how to address cross-cutting issues. The common country assessment and UNDAF provide a framework to establish these cross-sectoral linkages.

53. Both the common country assessment and UNDAF have focused on processes to reach synergy in the programming of system activities at the country level. In order to increase the effectiveness and relevance of these processes, more attention should be given in the future to possible ways to integrate system activities in the national programmes according to the principles of the programme approach. UNDAF provides the basis for achieving this integration, provided that its constituency and coverage are solidly established in a thorough dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, both national and international. As the General Assembly has repeatedly called for in its resolutions, this integration of United Nations system programmes into the national planning processes remains the final objective towards which all these strategic frameworks should aim.

VI. Impact evaluation of operational activities: capacity-building and poverty eradication

54. Impact evaluations were carried out in response to paragraph 53 of General Assembly resolution 53/192. They followed a pilot series of evaluations which were an input to the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review. They analysed the overall performance of the United Nations development system and were designed to provide inputs to guidance for the operational activities of the United Nations system. This second series focused on capacity-building and poverty eradication in six countries.

55. For the purposes of the exercise, capacity-building was understood to involve building up the capabilities, knowledge and security of individuals, strengthening or creating organizations and creating or modifying the environment within which the organizations would operate. Poverty eradication was considered as a process of eliciting positive changes in the capabilities of individuals in terms of access to knowledge, services and assets, and incomes. Both capacity-building and poverty eradication are closely linked to the general thrust of the country's development policies. It is therefore not surprising that much of United Nations system support to capacity-building was found to be related to poverty eradication. The detailed information on the results of impact evaluations, including reports of all missions, will be provided to the General Assembly within the framework of the review.

56. Some broad conclusions from these impact evaluation are summarized in the main report on the triennial comprehensive policy review (A/56/320). First, with the

right policy mix and institutional capacity and with adequate international assistance, poverty can be significantly and rapidly reduced and the United Nations system can play an important role in that process. United Nations system support to capacity-building has been an important part of that role. Secondly, there is a shortage of resources, both national and external, available for poverty reduction. The gains to be made nationally, regionally and globally from an increase of resources devoted to genuine poverty reduction should therefore be considerable. Thirdly, there is a close relationship between capacity-building and national ownership, both at the conceptual and the implementation stages. In this regard, appropriate involvement of national organizations, local beneficiaries and Governments is highly desirable.

57. One essential message is that, given the right environment, the United Nations system can assist recipient countries in successfully addressing key problems which have emerged at the core of global concerns, such as poverty eradication.

58. Thus, for example, in one case study a country has been clearly successful in reducing poverty and the United Nations system has made a significant contribution to that reduction. The key factors in that outcome have been the following: the Government exercised strong political leadership and the interaction with the United Nations system throughout the period worked well. The United Nations system was involved in a central transformation of the society. It had an input both to the policy and to the implementation process. The United Nations country team contained or mobilized appropriate skills and also benefited from strong leadership during a key period early on. This was capacity-building in the best and broadest sense.

59. In other cases, there are also clear instances of impact and achievements in creating or strengthening capacity that have been furthered through the operational activities of the United Nations system. However, they were less certain, less comprehensive and more vulnerable to events and a lack of resources. These limits to success appear to be attributable to a combination of internal constraints and external factors. Nevertheless, all evaluations note the decline in resources and the restriction it places on effectiveness. There has to be a minimum of resources available within the society, though not necessarily provided via the United Nations system, for poverty eradication and capacity-building to succeed.

60. The United Nations system has helped to broaden the concept of capacity-building from human resource development to cover institution-building and organizational development. Recent General Assembly legislation prompted the issuance of system-wide guidelines on capacity-building. However, evaluations suggest that capacity-building is still seen as being the reserve of the United Nations Development Programme. The principle that capacity-building is central to operational activities has yet to be fully operationalized by the system.

61. Likewise, the understanding of the concept of poverty eradication has also evolved. The International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and UNDP have all contributed to this evolution from a simple concept of income poverty to one that includes access to resources and services, particularly social services, capabilities, rights and inclusion. The poverty goals adopted by the Millennium Summit reflect this evolution. This approach is more operational and helps the international community and recipient countries address the issue in a more practical and comprehensive way, one that responds to the needs of countries, communities and individuals.

62. However, the evaluation studies found that the central concept of poverty eradication and the work of the individual entities of the United Nations development system could be more systematically linked. There is still some way to go in harmonizing particular sectoral preoccupations and the central concern of Member States for the reduction and eradication of poverty. It is not clear whether there is a consensus within the United Nations development system on how to eradicate poverty in the country concerned. Nor is it always clear that all the relevant disciplines are being brought to bear in this effort.

63. On a number of other issues, the evaluation studies have highlighted some gaps between concepts and practice or show that progress towards defined goals has been slow. Despite the emphasis on country ownership, in many cases operational activities are still seen as externally driven and ownership is closely related to impact in capacity-building. Programmes and projects should be prepared with greater attention to ways in which their content would contribute to an overall national strategy. Benchmarks and indicators of progress and achievement are often neglected, and the output of entire monitoring and evaluation systems does not yet include feedback to concept, solution and operations.

64. The inadequate institutional memory about past United Nations efforts and the consequent inability to learn lessons from experience remain a problem: current monitoring and evaluation practices may assure adequate accountability but do not assure an appropriate degree of lesson learning. The studies have also raised the question of whether, given the importance of poverty eradication, the United Nations system has the appropriate quality and mix of capacities available at the field level to address the broad range of issues with the required skills and expertise.

65. The studies found that advances have been made in the development of design, monitoring and evaluation tools. Some of these tools are well adapted to projects that have clear, narrowly defined objectives and clear, foreseeable implementation paths. However, these tools are less helpful where the precise course to be followed in implementation is not clearly known at the outset and where the objectives are necessarily imprecise and evolving, as is often the case with capacity-building. Creation and development of institutions are continuous processes and do not normally have a discreet time frame with a clearly defined beginning and end. If an organization is being created or strengthened, it is not always practical or cost-effective to determine at what instant it becomes self-sufficient. Furthermore, any such organization is part of the socio-economic system, which is also evolving and will continue to do so with or without the intervention. The purpose of the intervention is to change the nature and performance of one or more or all components of the system. As such, it is the performance of the system over time that should be the focus of the monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations Millennium Declaration provides important benchmarks for systemic monitoring and evaluation. However, work remains to be done, for example, in translating the goals of the Declaration into targets to be used at the agency, country or regional level. For instance, there is a matrix of indicators to be used by United Nations country teams in preparing their common country assessments. This provides helpful quantifiable targets. However, one lesson of these evaluations is that much that is necessary is not readily quantified, even if it can be observed and recorded by skilled, qualified observers. The challenge in evaluating the overall impact of operational activities is to use a judicious mix of quantitative and qualitative assessment to obtain a better understanding of the progress achieved.

VII. Field-level coordination

A. Simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures

66. Experience and a number of analyses conducted in recent years indicate that, notwithstanding progress made in harmonizing programme cycles and programming procedures, the diversity of rules, procedures, policies and formats that have been in effect over the broad scope of programme development and of operations of the United Nations system continue to place large burdens on recipient countries and complicate the coordination and management capacities of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General, in a previous report addressing the simplification and harmonization of programming, operational and administrative procedures that was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/192, gave a thorough review and assessment of the institutional provisions at the field level and of efforts made by the United Nations system in this area, particularly regarding programme cycles, processes, decentralization of authority and reorientation of executing modalities (see E/2000/46, sect. III).

67. While the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have frequently expressed the need for substantial reforms in the design, coordination and delivery of United Nations development support and urged appropriate actions to that end, it continues to be very difficult, as was revealed in the above-mentioned report, to achieve progress in harmonizing rules and procedures within the United Nations development system.

68. In this regard, the following are only two examples of a number of factors that are seen as hindering the effective development and conduct of programming and of operational activities: (a) diversity of programming procedures is a consequence of the diversity of mandates and of the institutional autonomy of the governing bodies of each organization; and (b) rules and procedures constitute the "nervous system" of each organization, and there is no compelling administrative force within an organization to introduce changes for the purpose of maintaining consistency with other parts of the system.

69. Nevertheless, even in the light of the acknowledged complexity of these and other factors, the General Assembly decided that changes in operational modalities were required to obtain effective impact and to maintain the necessary growth of development activities and of support provided by the United Nations system.

70. Along these lines, the General Assembly called for, among other things, the promotion and creation of common guidelines on procedures, especially as they related to programme components and project formulation, approval, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and administration. The changes that organizations did manage to introduce were usually of small consequence and slow to take effect, which largely explains the General Assembly's repeated urging of the funds and programmes to adopt measures and establish timetables for the advancement of the simplification and harmonization of procedures (E/2000/46, paras. 124 and 125).

71. Relatively good results have been achieved in the harmonization of programming cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes, which are considered essential prerequisites for the UNDAF process. As of March 2001, of a total of 94 countries in which harmonization is feasible, the number of countries

with harmonized programming cycles had reached 85. There were 18 countries where harmonization was not considered feasible and 47 where harmonization was not appropriate due to limited United Nations presence or programme activities. If this trend holds, it is estimated that by the end of 2004, 99 per cent of qualifying programme countries will have harmonized their cycles.

72. The boards of the funds and programmes placed emphasis on the country-driven nature of programme development, with the Governments and representatives of the United Nations funds and programmes, as well as United Nations agencies, firmly in control of the process. Various options for harmonizing programme development are under consideration, including procedures for defining responsibilities and for preparing country programmes and submission processes. In the programming area, efforts are under way to develop common formats for project design, which are expected to increasingly facilitate the promotion of joint or harmonized development initiatives, especially in the context of the common country assessment and UNDAF.

Table 1
Status of harmonization of programming cycles, as of March 2001

Category	*Description*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage*
A.	Countries with programme cycles harmonized	85	93
B.	Countries where the harmonization of programme cycles is still awaiting final alignment	5	6
C.	Countries where plans for harmonization have not been finalized	1	1
	Subtotal of countries where harmonization is feasible	**91**	**100**
D.	Countries where conditions remain uncertain/unstable and harmonization is not feasible	18	-
E.	Countries where harmonization is not appropriate due to limited United Nations presence or programme activities	47	-
	Total	**156**	-

73. With respect to programme approval processes, the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA met in June 2000 and adopted a series of key principles to facilitate programmatic complementarities, particularly the programme approval processes. These principles are: (a) to simplify the current processes in order to reduce the burden imposed on programme countries and United Nations country teams; (b) to encourage synergies between programmes of UNDG partner agencies; (c) to promote decentralization; (d) to ensure accountability of the executive boards through early inputs; and (e) to ensure the centrality of the common country assessment/UNDAF as a basis for programme development.

74. Moreover, an exclusive focus on the United Nations system regarding harmonization would be inadequate if it were not viewed as part of a need to address every effort to harmonize procedures with parallel activities of other external

development partners, multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and international NGOs.

75. Some inter-agency efforts have been made in the area of harmonization, mostly in the development of agreements on common guidelines. Inter-agency mechanisms, such as the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ)[6] and UNDG, have been active vehicles of these initiatives.[7] Some progress has been made in the area of decentralization and delegation of authority, although it is uneven between funds and programmes and specialized agencies, continuing to impact poorly on decision-making processes at the country level.

76. Specialized agencies of the United Nations system have undertaken considerable reorganization, including the decentralization of responsibilities at the country level. Nevertheless, more progress is required in the harmonization of procedures, particularly in the context of the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

77. It should be noted, however, that during 2000, UNDG and CCPOQ accelerated their efforts to promote the harmonization of programming cycles and procedures, particularly joint programmes, joint mid-term reviews and harmonized administrative procedures for national project personnel. These efforts need to be pursued further.

78. In September 2000, the CCPOQ working group on the United Nations resident coordinator system agreed with the draft guidance note on joint programming and decided to extend discussion on the subject to the entire United Nations system and designated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as task manager to lead this process. The working group agreed that the guidance note, with a menu of options, along with other needed revisions to allow for the participation by a larger group of United Nations organizations, would merit United Nations system-wide endorsement. UNESCO organized an informal meeting in November 2000 for this purpose, and one of its main decisions was to launch a pilot exercise on joint programming for field-testing of the draft guidance note in seven countries.[8]

79. Procedures for joint mid-term reviews of country programmes and UNDAFs have been established and are currently being field-tested in two countries[9] by their respective country teams with the objective of making them available for general use in 2001. Once programming cycles have been harmonized, the joint mid-term reviews of individual country programmes and UNDAFs will be much easier to complete and demands on the host Governments that have been participating in the review of country programmes of the individual funds and programmes are expected to be significantly lessened.

80. Of special importance is the concern about obtaining equitable treatment of employees of different agencies that work in the same country and are often performing similar functions. A guidance note on administrative procedures for national project personnel was prepared earlier in 2001 within the framework of UNDG to address mainly the questions of remuneration and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates for national project personnel. The note envisions consultations between interested agencies on salary scales that could be used by all United Nations agencies and discusses the conduct of surveys of labour markets as

well as of national staff of a country as bases for the establishment of salary scales for national project personnel.[10] In addition, a common definition of national project personnel was arrived at. Nine countries[11] were identified for field-testing based on information contained in the annual reports of the resident coordinators. In those countries, the United Nations system has taken initiatives to harmonize and coordinate administrative policies and procedures for application to locally recruited national personnel.[12]

81. The guidance note on administrative procedures for national project personnel is a step in the right direction, but it also reveals the extent of differences in operational modalities and approaches between agencies, and much work needs to be done to further harmonize the various procedures and practices of the United Nations organizations in this area.

The view from the field

82. A review and assessment of the replies of resident coordinators to the questionnaire indicates that in over two thirds of the reports received, the simplification and harmonization of monitoring and reporting requirements was deemed essential (just under one third of the resident coordinators considered it desirable but not essential). With respect to financial regulations, 80 per cent of the resident coordinators believe that simplification and harmonization is essential for effective programming and implementation of United Nations system activities.

83. Closely relevant is the matter of decentralization and delegation of authority by all United Nations organizations. Three fourths of the resident coordinators consider it essential for the effective conduct of their functions and responsibilities (one fourth of the resident coordinators deem it desirable but not essential).

Table 2
Importance of improvements in the opinion of the resident coordinator system
(Percentage)

Function	*Essential*	*Desirable but not essential*	*Minimal importance*
Simplify and harmonize monitoring and reporting requirements	72.6	27.4	-
Simplify and harmonize financial regulations	77.9	21.2	1.0
Introduce equal levels of decentralization and delegation of authority by all United Nations system organizations	73.1	26.0	1.0
Synchronize the mid-term reviews	37.5	54.8	7.7
Promote joint evaluation of projects and joint mid-term reviews	47.2	49.1	3.8

84. Synchronization of mid-term reviews was considered essential by less than 40 per cent of the resident coordinators. Nearly 55 per cent considered it desirable but not essential.

85. Views about the promotion of joint evaluation of projects and joint mid-term reviews were about equally divided between those considering it essential and those considering it desirable but not essential.

86. Although measurable harmonization has been achieved, much remains to be done to ease the burden on country offices and national counterparts. Delays in the CCA/UNDAF roll-out have constituted missed opportunities for developing more effectively coordinated programmes. UNDG partners are continuing efforts to explore ways in which existing procedures and practices can be further simplified while maintaining appropriate levels of accountability and quality. Areas of focus include the simplification of documentation, the streamlining of reporting requirements and the coordination of in-country programming processes, such as mid-term reviews, country programme preparation and programme implementation.

87. Simplified and harmonized administrative procedures for national project personnel hired by different United Nations organizations will be developed on the basis of an analysis by UNDG, in accordance with current practices of some country teams. The guidance notes on administrative procedures for national project personnel prepared by UNDG for this purpose could be a practical response to government calls for harmonization of the administrative procedures for national project personnel currently applied by different United Nations organizations.

88. In approaching every task of simplifying and harmonizing rules and procedures, it should be borne in mind that while the requirements or initiatives in this regard will usually originate at the operational level in the country, systematic progress cannot be achieved merely by actions at the country level without the firm support of headquarters. Major reforms on procedures require action at the headquarters level first.

B. Strengthening the resident coordinator system

89. In the three years under review, all the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/192 were operationalized and some progress was achieved on various fronts, including an improved resident coordinator selection process; a revised performance appraisal mechanism; better communication with and support to the field offices; improved coordination of the country team at the field level; and strengthening of the system's support to Governments, where requested, in coordinating external assistance in the pursuit of development goals. According to a questionnaire for the triennial comprehensive policy review, 47 of the 107 resident coordinators who responded rated the results of the reform initiatives in strengthening the system as extensive, while 59 per cent concluded that, to some extent, positive results had been achieved. Only one resident coordinator observed very little result.

The resident coordinator function

90. To widen the pool of prospective resident coordinators and strengthen the ownership of the resident coordinator function by all organizations of the United Nations system, further steps were taken through the Inter-Agency Advisory Panel. The competency assessment centre was engaged to assess the competency of resident coordinator candidates against the resident coordinator job description to ensure that qualified candidates with the right skill profile were kept on a roster.

When a resident coordinator post becomes vacant, the Panel presents its recommendation to the UNDP Administrator.[13] Since the competency assessment centre started operations in October 1998, a total of 144 candidates have been sponsored by ACC member organizations and assessed. It was agreed that by 2002, all newly appointed as well as incumbent resident coordinators will have completed the assessment. These mechanisms stress the collective action to achieve broad ownership of the resident coordinator system by the entire United Nations system.

91. In encouraging non-UNDP staff to take up the challenge of resident coordinator positions, the Inter-Agency Advisory Panel also sought to improve the gender balance of potential resident coordinator candidates by proposing special measures to recruit women candidates for resident coordinator posts (the measures were adopted by CCPOQ in June 2000). All ACC members agreed that greater efforts should be made to identify internal candidates with good potential, including those at the P-4 level, and that in the meantime external candidates should also be considered.

92. To date, 23 incumbent resident coordinators have been recruited from United Nations agencies other than UNDP and 29 are women, including 3 designates.[14] An evaluation by the competency assessment centre shows that all organizations involved, except one, consider the new selection mechanism, including competency assessment, to be an improvement over the earlier procedures and much more satisfactory from an inter-agency point of view.

93. The performance appraisal system has also been improved. A new performance appraisal system of resident coordinators, based on acquired experience with the previous systems, is being established, to include the appraisal of resident coordinators by the executive heads of the ACC member organizations; the 180-degree feedback[15] exercise, which is at the pilot phase in 10 countries; and the institutionalized self-appraisal of the United Nations country teams in the annual reports of the resident coordinators. The preparation of the annual report is an opportunity for the resident coordinator and the country team to self-assess their performance against the annual work plan.

Country teams

94. Field-level coordination and a participatory approach in the functioning of the resident coordinator system have always been stressed as the means to focus limited resources on priority areas and to avoid duplication. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly once again reiterated the point and encouraged, inter alia, greater use of thematic groups.

95. Over the past three years, there has been an increase in the number of theme groups, ranging over a variety of issues. The most prominent themes observed include HIV/AIDS, gender, poverty alleviation, education, and health and nutrition. The theme groups facilitate better dialogue and interaction of the country team and, in some cases, with national partners through policy dialogue. Good practices in this aspect are abundant. However, some resident coordinators also noted in their reports that the theme groups create additional workload and tax the country team's resources/capacity, so that the meetings of the theme groups often become merely information-sharing. This is confirmed by the CCA/UNDAF evaluation, which recommends vigorous trimming of the number of theme groups and more meaningful and substantive cooperation, including joint strategic planning and

collaborative programming. The external evaluation of CCA/UNDAF cited the excessive use of thematic groups and their duplication, especially as compared with other exercises that make use of them (i.e., the Comprehensive Development Framework, PRSPs, sector-wide approaches and donor coordination arrangements). Meanwhile, available data also show that the theme groups, with support from a dedicated staff, usually generate more substantive cooperation in the area of joint planning, joint programmes and, in a few cases, resource mobilization. The improved functioning and coherence of a country team tend to correlate closely with how participatory its theme groups are and how effectively they work. The involvement of government representatives, donors and other international and national development partners in the thematic groups varies widely.

96. In order to improve support to field-level operation, ACC and UNDG have enhanced their efforts in improving communications with resident coordinators and the country teams and providing policy guidance, training and substantive and management support, through: (a) issuing a number of guidelines and guidance notes on key operational and programme issues; (b) reaching the field offices via improved RCNet and the newly launched Devlink;[16] (c) streamlining the training management mechanism and revising training materials for the resident coordinator induction programme, including support to CCA/UNDAF by the field offices/regional commissions; and (d) continuing to provide dedicated resident coordinator resources for coordination activities from UNDP.

97. Nonetheless, challenges remain: the relationship of the resident coordinator system with Governments and other development partners needs particular attention. The majority of the resident coordinators acknowledged in their responses to the questionnaire that further efforts should be made to involve other development partners, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, bilateral donors and civil society. There is also room to reinvigorate the commitment of all United Nations organizations to the resident coordinator system. It is important, in particular, to have more substantive coordination in the area of joint programming, to delegate a uniform level of authority to the field level, and to simplify and harmonize procedures (see sect. C below for initiatives under way). Given that the United Nations system is better positioned to share experience within a country and between countries, more creative means should be sought to share best practices. An effective performance appraisal system, with linkage to competency assessment and opportunity for future career development, could encourage high morale and considerably enhance the functioning of the resident coordinator system.

C. Common premises and sharing of administrative services

98. As a key component of the United Nations programme of reform, several measures have been taken to support the planning, implementation and oversight of the United Nations house programme and advance common services initiatives. A clear definition and criteria for the identification of United Nations houses was endorsed by the Secretary-General on 10 February 1998. A new methodology for the selection and analysis of opportunities to establish additional common premises/United Nations houses and an executive decision-making process to facilitate the entire process were put in place. In addition, the guidelines on the administrative management of the resident coordinator system, approved by CCPOQ in September 1998 on behalf of ACC, have been developed to help to promote

common services by providing a basis for their equitable co-management by user entities. Subsequently, new guidelines on operational management of common services were developed, in consultation with operations managers from the field, to facilitate the implementation of common and shared services at the country level. Guidance and support are being provided to country teams to promote the establishment and enhancement of common premises and sharing of administrative services.

Common premises/United Nations houses

99. A total of 41 United Nations houses were inaugurated or designated between 1996 and December 2000. Since 1998, the UNDG Management Group on Services and Premises has been regularly reviewing proposals from country teams, examining possibilities for sharing common premises in a cost-efficient manner and meeting the requirements for a United Nations house. The Management Group reviewed 55 proposals in 1998, 58 in 1999 and 32 in 2000. In 2000, the pace of proposals being submitted to the Management Group had slowed as the more straightforward opportunities for establishing United Nations houses had already been examined, and where criteria had been met, United Nations houses had been designated in 1998 and 1999. Recognizing this, the Management Group identified and contacted 43 countries where there might be potential for establishing a United Nations house. Since 1998, the UNDG Management Group has undertaken 30 missions, six of them in 2000. A total of 38 countries were visited on these missions, sometimes on more than one occasion, to offer technical support to country teams in locating and working out logistics of establishing United Nations houses. The support of the Management Group, especially through the missions, was cited in the resident coordinator annual reports of 2000 as very useful to the country teams in negotiating with Governments and evaluating potential premises.

100. During the period from 1996 to 2000, the results indicated in table 3 were achieved.

Table 3
Establishment of common premises/United Nations houses, 1996-2000

Date	*Status*	*No.*	*Countries*
1996-1997	Inaugurated/designated	4	Lesotho, Malaysia, Russian Federation, South Africa
1998	Inaugurated/designated	26	Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Comoros, Costa Rica, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Swaziland, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates
1999	Inaugurated/designated	6	Belgium, Belize, Latvia, Pakistan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine
2000	Inaugurated/designated	5	Bahrain, Botswana, Ecuador, Gambia, Slovakia
2001-2004	Proposed United Nations houses under consideration		The target is set for five United Nations houses to be designated in 2001 and to bring the total to at least 50 by 2004

101. A consolidated common database and lease management maintenance software (Aperture) was developed during 1997 and 1998 and completed in 1999 to facilitate the management of country office premises. Updating and enhancing Aperture and the production of management reports has been an ongoing effort.

Common services

102. Based on the CCPOQ guidelines on the administrative management of the resident coordinator system covering the area of common services, the UNDG Management Group on Services and Premises is developing tools and guidelines on the implementation of common and shared services. As a first step, the Group collected systematic information on the current status of and experience with common or shared services in country offices. Data were received from 126 country offices, supplying information from 446 questionnaires from UNDG and non-UNDG agencies. A database on common services was established as a result. As a follow-up to this survey, the UNDG, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, organized a workshop on common services to evaluate experience to date and to develop operational guidelines for the enhancement of the effective and efficient operation of common services at the country level. On the basis of this information and best practices, the UNDG Management Group has developed guidelines, including model service agreements, which could be adapted by country teams, possible standards for the provision of services and indicators for service performance measurement, and suggestions for management of the common services as well as related accountability and cost-recovery matters.

103. The most recent questionnaire addressed to the United Nations resident coordinator system produced the results given in table 4.

Table 4
Percentage of common or shared main administrative services achieved by United Nations country teams

	100	*90-71*	*70-51*	*50-25*	*<25*	*0*
Financial	3.1	4.1	16.3	29.6	35.7	11.2
Security	50.0	33.0	9.0	2.0	3.0	3.0
Personnel-related services	2.0	9.9	14.9	33.7	30.7	8.9
Conference facilities	13.9	14.9	18.8	15.0	23.8	12.9
Telecommunications and information technology	2.0	17.6	20.6	22.5	30.4	6.9
Transportation	-	1.0	8.1	10.1	41.4	39.4
Procurement/contracting	1.0	3.0	8.9	18.8	40.6	27.7
Liaison (administrative) services	1.0	7.2	18.6	25.8	32.0	15.5

Table 5
Time frames established by United Nations country teams to achieve full common administrative services
(Percentages)

	No time frame	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005 or beyond*
Financial	85.2	5.7	3.4	2.3	2.3	1.0
Security	46.7	44.0	6.7	1.3	1.3	-
Personnel-related services	80.2	5.8	5.8	2.3	3.5	2.3
Conference facilities	62.2	14.6	12.2	6.1	2.4	2.4
Telecommunications and information technology	52.9	24.1	14.9	6.9	2.3	-
Transportation	83.0	2.3	8.0	1.1	3.4	2.3
Procurement/contracting	67.4	9.0	13.5	6.7	3.4	1.1
Liaison (administrative) services	66.7	14.3	11.9	6.0	2.4	-

104. The data contained in table 5 shows that although over 25 per cent of common/shared services have been achieved in basically all main administrative services except transportation and procurement/contracting, only security and telecommunications and information technology could achieve about 50 per cent of sharing by the year 2002. To improve this situation, the operational guidelines for the implementation of common services were approved by UNDG and adopted by CCPOQ on behalf of ACC in September 2000. UNDG has developed a proposal to field-test the guidelines in some pilot countries starting in 2001, in order to further improve the guidelines and develop a global roll-out for common services implementation.

Lessons learned and challenges

105. Through the experience of UNDG during the first three years of the United Nations house initiative, the following lessons have been learned:

(a) Many existing premises are insufficient in size to accommodate the staff of the four UNDG executive committee members;

(b) In many cases, moving to a United Nations house may initially result in an uneven financial burden, with some organizations experiencing benefits while others incur higher costs. Therefore, there is a need for support for these initiatives, especially during initial stages, when set-up costs can overshadow long-term cost benefits;

(c) The modality of seeking appropriate and ready-to-occupy rent-free premises from Governments needs to be pursued further and more aggressively, as it is the most cost-effective modality in establishing a United Nations house;

(d) Obtaining land grants from the Government for the construction of office buildings by UNDG participating organizations tends to be the highest-risk and least preferred modality for the establishment of United Nations houses;

(e) The use of outsourced professional and technical expertise has been a valuable element in analysing proposals from country teams;

(f) The harmonization of terms and conditions of the basic cooperation agreements of UNDG partners in regard to the provision of office space would facilitate negotiations with Governments;

(g) To facilitate common services at the country level, there is a need to harmonize administrative services and training in administrative practices and common services;

(h) The rapidly advancing technology should be put to further use to increase cohesion and cooperation at the country level, for example, by sharing information technology services, establishing a global information network on lessons learned and good practices, and creating virtual United Nations houses when actual United Nations houses are not possible.

106. Experience to date has indicated that many such challenges can be overcome through active dialogue between participating agencies.

D. Monitoring and evaluation

107. The legislation emanating from the three most recent triennial policy reviews included provisions designed to improve the contribution of monitoring and evaluation of operational activities to the effectiveness and impact of those activities. The principles on which this legislation was based were the need: (a) to involve national authorities in monitoring and evaluation and to strengthen their capacity to undertake and use the results obtained from it; (b) to move the focus of monitoring and evaluation away from project-level issues and a concern for inputs towards questions of programme effectiveness and impact; (c) to encourage joint evaluations so that all elements of United Nations programmes in a country will be assessed coherently and feedback is provided to those who need and can use it; and (d) to focus on using the results of evaluations to improve the effectiveness and impact of operational activities of the United Nations system and to determine the most effective ways they can contribute to Member States.

108. The United Nations system has been regularly consulted about the appropriateness and utility of this legislation and has indicated its support for it. It is clear that many United Nations agencies have devoted careful thought, human resources and effort to achieving the above ends. Nonetheless, all impact evaluations refer either to an absence of an institutional memory of the United Nations system or to the weakness thereof, particularly at the country level, and the need for greater learning from experience by the United Nations system. Many entities within as well as outside the United Nations development system have diligently addressed the problem of learning lessons and feeding them back into operations over the years. Typical measures that different parts of the system have taken include electronic databases, formal inclusion of lessons learned in programme and project reviews, and training and other related mechanisms.

109. Expenditure on the monitoring and evaluation of operational activities is reported to be close to 1 per cent of programme resources. This means that if operational activities involve $4.5 billion per annum, some $45 million is being spent in their monitoring and evaluation. According to the current six impact

evaluations (as well as the previous six), they do not appear to be having the desired effect in terms of feedback. This leads to the question of whether the United Nations system and Member States are receiving the best return on the use of these resources.

110. It has been noted elsewhere that there is a trend away from project-level activities and a general move towards strategic and policy issues. This has not been necessarily accompanied by a consequent and equivalent shift in the focus of monitoring and evaluation away from technical concerns of issues of project management towards more strategic concerns of country-level effectiveness and programme and organizational impact.

111. Nevertheless, a number of United Nations entities are clearly endeavouring to move in this direction. One such example is the UNDP results-oriented annual report and its move towards results-based management. Another is the efforts of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to devise indicators of corporate performance. The endeavours of UNICEF to link its work to the quantitative goals of the World Summit for Children have been well documented.

112. In its resolution 55/162 of 14 December 2000 on follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General urgently to prepare a long-term "road map" towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration within the United Nations system and to focus on the results and benchmarks achieved, identify gaps in implementation and strategies for reducing them, and highlight in particular cross-sectoral issues and cross-cutting themes on development and peace and security.

113. This provides the basic framework against which most future operational activities should be judged. Work remains to be done in translating these millennial goals into targets to be used at the agency, country or regional level. The United Nations system has already made significant progress in this area. For instance, there is a matrix of indicators and targets which is to be used by United Nations country teams when preparing their common country assessments.

114. However, additional work is needed, both by specialized agencies for sectoral goals and by United Nations entities dealing with cross-cutting issues, such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse or capacity-building, to elaborate the benchmarks, targets and indicators that can be used in the design of national and, where appropriate, regional programmes designed to reduce all aspects of poverty. The capacity-building aspects of poverty eradication require further work if appropriate indicators are to be applied. As noted in the publication that emerged from the first round of the evaluations,[17] any assessment system or set of indicators for capacity-building must go beyond the application of the narrow, reductionist, somewhat mechanistic measurement systems that are sometimes in evidence in the international development community. Inappropriate monitoring systems can seriously distort programme design and management and can damage the very performance that most participants are seeking.

115. Despite legitimate concerns about a lack of agreed definitions, benchmarks, indicators, data and institutional memory, each of the impact evaluation teams was able to make some definite assessments about the quality of United Nations system operations and their impact. This suggests that there is relevant substance to be drawn from "reflective practitioners" talking to reflective actors and that much more

could be learned about how to eradicate poverty successfully if all relevant United Nations entities were to internalize this process and elaborate, for their respective fields, the basic standards to use in assessing monitoring and evaluation of United Nations operational activities, the basic lessons that can be learned from such a dialogue and a method for feeding back any lessons learned into operations.

E. Field structure

116. Field structure should be examined not only as a country office of a United Nations system organization but even more as an integral part of national development infrastructure. The staffing of the offices should be demand-responsive and reflect the needs and requirements that might be placed on the organization, to be determined in consultation with the Government. In the disposition of the substantive skills of an organization, the minimum but time-bound capacities at the individual country level necessary for rapid and effective response should be a major factor. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/192, called for the United Nations system skill profile to be tailored to national development needs rather than determined by the institutional structure of the United Nations. This important decision has to be operationalized.

117. Not all specialized agencies have field presence; this is particularly the case for the smaller, but often the more technically and technologically oriented agencies. Measures must be implemented to ensure that a lack of field presence does not lead to depriving the country of the needed multilateral assistance. While the agencies' scale of operations may not warrant wide field presence and budgetary constraints in fact virtually prohibit such a course, a selective and limited representation in countries where their area of specialty is of high priority might be considered.

F. Involvement of specialized agencies

118. An integral part of the United Nations development system is the specialized agencies. Their full and substantive participation as partners in United Nations system development work is essential. They are the repositories in large measure of the technical capacities of the United Nations system. Important changes have occurred in the relationship with the specialized agencies in the past two decades in response to changing development trends and requirements. It is essential to mobilize the technical expertise of the agencies, which are an integral part of the United Nations system, since it can make a sizeable contribution to the system's ability to meet development challenges.

119. One of the concerns about the functioning of the system has been that the bulk of its technical and substantive capabilities has been concentrated at headquarters, to be deployed on the basis of need and requests from the country offices. Resources and the locus of expertise at all levels — global, regional, national — should be commensurate with functions and responsibilities. While there are important global tasks that require a strong global presence, substantive skills required to backstop country demands should be within easy reach. Owing to budgetary constraints, some agencies have in fact reduced their staff at the country level. The focus of development is local and the locus of United Nations system expertise for development cooperation should also be, in large measure, local. The global "think

tank" function and normative work of the agencies are crucial, but they are set into motion as backstopping in response to specific situations and requests, and they should complement each other.

120. Recent efforts by some organizations towards establishing or strengthening subregional offices and regionalization have to be kept in tandem with creating a country-focused critical mass of substantive expertise for rapid response. In the changing context of growing country-specific but rapidly shifting needs, greater reliance on field presence and expertise is necessary. Setting up subregional offices is a step forward, but they cannot substitute for the need for local, specific and rapid response. There is a need for closer integration of agencies' approaches on subjects of common concern, such as food security and poverty reduction, at the country level. Representatives of United Nations agencies function in dual capacities in the field: as representatives of the concerned organization and as members of the resident coordinator system, and thus must be able to function in such a way that they complement and draw upon each other's expertise.

121. The role and relevance of United Nations specialized agencies will become more pivotal in the emerging knowledge society. The specialized agencies are also technological organizations. The integrated approach to development and the development of such sectors as agriculture, health, industry and communications are two sides of the same coin. Growth and higher productivity in such sectors as agriculture is essential for integrated and sustainable development. Many developing countries need an international organization to provide information and help in the search for scrutiny of and access to technological data. The United Nations system has to respond to such requests. The concept of "shared skills" between the organizations of the United Nations system at the country level also needs to be pursued to achieve economies of scale and enhanced effectiveness.

G. Cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

122. As indicated in the management plan for implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192, strengthening the interaction between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in the area of operational activities has focused on four main elements: closer linkages regarding arrangements for development support, increased policy dialogue, greater efforts to ensure a practical impact and enhanced cooperation at the country level.

123. During the period under review, a joint exploratory review of relations between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was undertaken, which included numerous recommendations that are applicable at the policy level, at the headquarters level and at the level of country operations.[18]

124. The common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines specifically include the encouragement of collaboration and invite the Bretton Woods institutions to participate in country teams for the formulation of these instruments.

125. At the same time, upon the adoption of the Comprehensive Development Framework, the World Bank proposed to the United Nations system that it should stimulate exchanges and participation in this work by members of UNDG and by other agencies of the United Nations system. This was expanded to cover exchanges

of information and experience in relation to the PRSP process when it was introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

126. Progressively broader and more substantive inter-agency discussions have been held at intervals on these experiences. At the field level, country teams have been active in relation to some of the frameworks launched by the Bretton Woods institutions and have recently been contributing ideas and proposals to help Governments and the Bretton Woods institutions take into account important elements that had been inadequately covered.

127. Most resident coordinators believe that this collaboration focuses on information-sharing and on supporting the capacity of Governments to mobilize and coordinate donor engagement and resources. Regarding collaboration and participation in each other's programmes and projects, results are mixed, ranging from moderate to significant involvement of the respective organizations. This was also the pattern regarding involvement in the common country assessment and UNDAF processes, as well as United Nations system involvement in Bretton Woods institutions mechanisms, such as the Comprehensive Development Framework and PRSP processes.

128. Potential areas for future cooperation include more intensive cooperation on their strategic and programming frameworks and initiatives, closer collaboration in the functioning of the resident coordinator system and implementation of plans of action of global conferences and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

H. Cooperation with regional development banks

129. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly encouraged greater cooperation between the regional banks and all funds and programmes of the United Nations system. The extent of collaboration is currently quite limited, but has considerable potential for growth.

130. The great majority of resident coordinators and Governments feel that there is a good degree of information-sharing between the United Nations system and the regional banks. Many resident coordinators also believe that the United Nations system and the banks show some degree of collaboration in programmes and projects and in supporting government capacity for coordination of interactions with donors and for resource mobilization. United Nations agencies are in some instances involved in identification, design, supervision and/or implementation of regional bank projects.

131. In particular, WHO and FAO report growing collaboration with the regional banks to take on new programmes related, for example, to the HIV/AIDS epidemic or to drug control.

132. With respect to the direction of current work and interest in the regional banks, the African Development Bank adopted a new vision statement in 1999, calling for greater partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, the organizations of the United Nations system, bilateral agencies, the private sector, civil society and NGOs.

133. The Asian Development Bank in March 2001 launched a new long-term strategy to help developing member countries eradicate extreme poverty by 2015, in

keeping with the international development goals agreed in recent United Nations-sponsored global conferences. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which was involved in creating the Asian Bank, continues to have a close relationship with it.

134. Close collaboration continues to be in effect between the Inter-American Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as with other United Nations organizations at the country level, especially in support of the economic integration of Latin America.

135. Views expressed by several United Nations agencies suggest that regional banks could reassess their lending portfolios in the light of international conferences and conventions, priorities for reaching international development targets (e.g., development targets for 2015) and related sectoral priorities.

136. In that regard, there may be ways for combining the financial strength and expertise of the regional banks with the analytical, advocacy, technical and other skills of the United Nations system. The comparative advantages of the various institutions could produce greater synergy and impact of efforts in response to national requests.

VIII. Evolving dimensions of operational activities

A. Humanitarian assistance, peace-building and development

137. United Nations interventions in crisis and post-crisis situations, an important part of United Nations work at the country level during the past decade, will continue to pose a mounting challenge to the United Nations development system, underscoring an increasing intersection between peace and development, peacemaking and peace-building, human rights and humanitarian assistance, relief and reconstruction. According to one estimate, there are as many as 45 countries that are termed as special development situations. The General Assembly has been calling for a comprehensive approach, including the early application of development tools in humanitarian emergencies.

138. In 1999, the Security Council invited the Economic and Social Council to contribute to the development of a long-term support programme for Haiti. In 2000, the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to consider establishing an advisory group on countries emerging from conflict in Africa, and the Council was expected to respond to this request at the high-level segment on Africa to be held at its substantive session of 2001. In the presidential statement following the Security Council's meeting in February 2001 on a comprehensive approach to peace-building (S/PRST/2001/5), the Council noted that peace-building encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms.

139. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/502), virtually every part of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, is currently engaged in one form of peace-building or another, because peace-building embraces many activities, including political, military, diplomatic, development,

human rights, child protection, gender, humanitarian assistance and many other issues.

140. At the country level, United Nations resident coordinators, normally responsible for development cooperation, also serve as humanitarian coordinators, where needed.

141. Country teams consulted for the triennial comprehensive policy review expressed mixed views on the effectiveness of the interactions among relief, development and the political and peace operations of the United Nations, as well as of the linkages among the consolidated appeals process and the common country assessment and UNDAF processes. Similar views were expressed on the linkages among the resident coordinator, humanitarian coordinator and special representative of the Secretary-General functions. To help strengthen and clarify these interrelationships, the Secretary-General issued a guidance note on the subject in December 2000.

142. Consultations with the system and Member States suggested that greater emphasis should be given to coordination and consultations among all these areas.

143. From the perspective of development cooperation, it is relevant that the resident coordinator system is working in the country before, during and after crises, and can thus contribute significantly to a critical continuum in this process.

144. The strategic framework approach applied in specific areas has identified relevant principles and relationships. Accordingly, elements of this approach may be applicable in many countries, reinforcing the importance of a comprehensive approach.

145. Strengthening the United Nations country-level capacity to implement such a comprehensive approach will ensure more coherence. Both the common country assessment and UNDAF offer a significant opportunity to identify and implement preventive and post-conflict peace-building strategies. The peace-building process requires coherence in the immediate and longer-term analysis, planning and programming. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are well situated at the country level to help meet the challenge, particularly through the resident coordinator system, although competence at the country level in this area may require adjustments.

146. Recognizing that the most serious challenge to sustainable development is conflict, UNDG is working to ensure that peace-building and conflict prevention concerns are integrated in the common country assessments, UNDAFs and emergency or recovery plans. These concerns can be addressed only in close partnership with national Governments and civil society.

B. Human rights, including the right to development

147. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly recognized human rights, including the right to development, as an important element of the development cooperation efforts of the United Nations system.[19]

148. The United Nations Millennium Declaration gives special emphasis to the promotion of democracy, strengthening the rule of law and respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the

right to development. It reiterates the importance of upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promoting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.

149. The greater majority of the country teams report that Governments in programme countries are requesting increased support in implementing international conventions and support in capacity-building in the area of human rights. Member States confirm the same evolution.

150. A number of country teams report the involvement of the resident coordinator system in implementing the United Nations mandates in human rights, including the right to development through consultations and advocacy, human rights outreach and education and programme planning, but results vary from country to country.

151. The United Nations system has committed itself to a more explicit and consistent human rights approach. Some of its individual organizations have a long and significant involvement, while for others the implications of this evolution have not yet been fully internalized.

152. The common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines adopted by UNDG in 1999 include attention to human rights issues in the programming of development cooperation throughout the United Nations system. Thereafter, agencies of the system devised a set of guidelines and related information on human rights for use by the resident coordinator system. On behalf of ACC, CCPOQ approved the document in March 2000. The guidelines treat human rights principles and mechanisms, ways to approach and assist Governments and means of integrating human rights into work programmes.

153. The common country assessment and UNDAF have provided a vehicle for mobilizing attention to these issues since demands for technical cooperation linked to human rights are growing and changing. Formerly treated primarily as a separate field of technical assistance, human rights are increasingly expected to be integrated into key thematic areas of development cooperation, in particular in relation to poverty, gender and governance. Consequently, the capacity of country teams to address human rights issues needs to be enhanced.

C. Information and communication technologies

154. Information and communication technologies are now at the hinge of global change, the knowledge gap and the cutting edge of competition. Communication technologies are also loosening monopolistic control over information, promoting transparency and accountability. The emerging knowledge-based and networked economy is also changing the contrast and dynamics of development. A wired or wireless society is a more open society.

155. The world information market grew by 12.2 per cent a year from 1985 to 1995, and continues to grow. This rate is almost three times the growth rate of world gross domestic product (GDP). However, a large number of developing countries have lagged behind. Electronic communications, so commonplace in the North, are still scarce in the South. The digital divide is real. By any measure, whether number of telephones, of Internet users and providers or of computers, developing countries lag. Wide disparities persist within the South as well. For example, sub-Saharan Africa has just one phone for every 5,300 people. The polarization of

communications correspond to the urban-rural divide. In parts of Asia and Africa, rural telephone density is just one fifth of that in the largest cities. Even the goal of bringing a telephone within easy access of every global inhabitant by the end of the twentieth century has not been reached.

156. Despite the backlog and impediments, new technologies offer new hopes and opportunities. The plummeting cost of IT makes it less capital-intensive and more affordable to less affluent societies. The high cost of fully developed physical infrastructure, a major development impediment in many developing societies, may also be overcome with the use of IT. Infrastructure is still critical, but it is an infrastructure of knowledge, knowledge workers and knowledge farmers with the ability to access, search and use information.

157. The chronic shortage of schools, teachers, doctors and markets in remote areas can now be overcome through virtual schools, telemedicine and telemarketing. The Internet has provided farmers and workers with instant access to critical information. It can open marketing doors to small and medium-sized enterprises without expensive infrastructure. It is a powerful tool for poverty reduction and the empowerment of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. In the all-important area of agricultural productivity and food security, biotechnology and new farming, such new technologies offer an immense opportunity because they are less field- and scale-specific and more plant-specific. They lend themselves to application by small and marginal farmers, the bulk of the rural poor. Remote-sensing technologies offer pinpoint accuracy concerning what exists on the ground, an invaluable tool to planners and administrators.

158. Although a majority of countries are critically short of basic communications infrastructure, a number of developing countries are seizing the opportunity opened by information technology. For example, they are using the potential of these technologies to stimulate exports, microchips and software, to position specific priority industries globally and for improved administrative services. A major breakthrough is in the area of good governance. E-governance is one of the pillars of the IT edifice and a means to move towards a more open, responsive, accountable and transparent system. It includes wide and extensive use of videoconferencing for dissemination, monitoring and evaluating the performance of public officials. Online registration of legal deeds and one-stop services for citizens are made possible.

159. The international development community can backstop national efforts and make a crucial difference. Many organizations of the United Nations system are involved in assisting countries by offering policy advice and technical assistance. Several United Nations system organizations, including specialized agencies, have activities that use IT as a management tool, for information outreach and in their technical cooperation. The United Nations has launched the Health InterNetwork for developing countries and the United Nations Information Technology Service. The Global Development Gateway of the World Bank is another example. A brief indication of some aspects of IT was included in the previous report of the Secretary-General on operational activities (see E/2000/46/Add.1), mostly related to connectivity and United Nations system web sites.

160. The ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000 succinctly captures the current state of knowledge and the actions to be taken by various partners. The declaration was endorsed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and thus constitutes a

major mandate to the United Nations system. The Council called for the establishment of an information and communication technology (ICT) task force to promote the use of ICT as a cutting-edge tool for development. Pursuant to that mandate, the Secretary-General constituted a high-level ICT advisory group and undertook worldwide consultations, and on the basis of the outcome of those consultations the Council authorized the Secretary-General to set up the task force. A major intergovernmental initiative outside the United Nations system is the setting-up of the Digital Opportunity Task Force by the group of eight major industrialized nations. The forthcoming International Telecommunication Union (ITU)-sponsored World Summit of the Information Society, to be held in 2003, will review the role of communications, investment and technology in creating the information society infrastructure and in bridging the digital divide.

161. The ministerial declaration, among other things, called upon the international organizations, funds and programmes and United Nations specialized agencies to facilitate the transfer of ICT, in particular, to developing countries and to support efforts towards capacity-building and the production of content. Through its operational activities, the United Nations development system can contribute to this process. Not only can its effectiveness and impact be greatly enhanced with the use of ICT, but the United Nations system can also develop innovative modalities for strengthening the ICT capacity of developing countries. Knowledge networking is emerging as a key area of development and requires much more active United Nations system support. ICT can be integrated and applied in all sectors of programmes in innovative ways. Agencies are seeking to expand their capacities and systems and are developing programmes to respond to and make use of the transformations taking place, but for the whole area of ICT for development, huge and innovative new steps need to be taken.

162. The task is sectoral as well as cross-sectoral, involving both United Nations specialized agencies, including the World Bank, and United Nations funds and programmes. Resident coordinators have reported that as many as 40 per cent of programme countries have expressed interest in seeking United Nations assistance in mobilizing ICT as a tool of development. Half the responding countries have identified technology transfer and assistance in obtaining access to foreign skills as one of their least successful areas in receiving assistance. Given their growing importance, information and communication technologies for development require growing attention from organizations of the United Nations system.

D. Gender in development

163. In paragraphs 25, 46 and 47 of its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly emphasized the need for mainstreaming gender in United Nations operational activities in all fields and urged that measures be taken to improve gender balance in the Secretariat. In the three years under review, commitment to this issue has been increasingly strong and some progress has been achieved.

Mainstreaming gender

164. Gender perspective has been given consistent consideration in country programme/project design (for a detailed assessment of progress in implementing the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2000, see

E/CN.6/2000/3). Among the more than 100 resident coordinators responding to the triennial comprehensive policy review questionnaire, 66 per cent and 79 per cent respectively acknowledge significant gender mainstreaming in the formulation of programmes and projects, and in the common country assessment/UNDAF. The responses of donor and recipient countries to the same questions reveal a similar pattern.

165. The special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in June 2000, has given further impetus to the issue of gender mainstreaming.

166. The common country assessment/UNDAF exercises provide all United Nations agencies with a systematic entry point to mainstream gender in their operational activities. The UNDG Subgroup on Gender has been actively involved from the very beginning in the preparation and piloting of the common country assessment/ UNDAF guidelines and their pilot implementation. As a result, the gender perspective is adequately reflected in the common country assessment/UNDAF guidelines, and the common country assessment indicators contain sex-disaggregated parameters.

167. The theme group approach has been widely used at the country level to tackle this cross-cutting issue. Fifty-eight theme groups were operating at the field level in 1998, and in 1999 the number increased to 68. The areas where the theme groups/ task forces on gender are active include advocacy, support to host Governments in legislation, technical support in capacity-building and community-level interventions. The annual reports of the resident coordinators reveal that many workshops were held to sensitize policy makers and government officials, as well as United Nations staff, about gender issues. Training sessions, for example, were also organized for the statistics branches of recipient Governments on the concept of sex-disaggregated data and the collection and analysis thereof. Efforts were also made to involve local NGOs in the national legislation process and the implementation of the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

168. Responses to the questionnaires sent out to the field confirm the special attention paid to women at the project level.[20] Several agencies affirmed that community-based projects, such as projects on microfinancing and reusable resources, are usually targeted at women as part of poverty alleviation programmes. An exemplary case is the United Nations girls' education initiative launched by the Secretary-General in April 2000. The initiative aims to mount a sustained campaign to improve the quality and availability of girls' education through a collaborative partnership of different entities within and outside the United Nations system.

169. Networks of gender focal points and gender specialists also enable various United Nations agencies to take advantage of the existing expertise on gender within the system. For example, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has maintained and sought to expand its network of regional gender advisers. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO all maintain their own network of gender focal points. However, there is a need to avoid duplication and establish a system-wide pool of gender resources and expertise.

170. Efforts have also been made in the area of training and capacity-building.[21] UNICEF and the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention prepared internal guidelines on gender for programme officers. WFP held training

workshops on gender. UNIFEM has completed a concept paper on gender mainstreaming in the common country assessment/UNDAF, which will be the basis for designing a training module at the United Nations Staff College. Notwithstanding this progress, this area continues to be identified by several agencies as the most challenging one. United Nations staff need further training to maintain a gender perspective, effectively collect sex-disaggregated data and generate gender-sensitive analysis, disseminating good practices.[22]

Improving gender balance

171. An administrative instruction (ST/AI/1999/9) on special measures to recruit women has been issued with the aim of accelerating the pace of achieving gender balance in the Secretariat. As a result, the representation of women has improved at the D-1 level. The number of women at that level increased from 77 (28.4 per cent) as at 31 December 1999 to 88 (30 per cent) as at 30 November 2000 (for more information, see E/CN.6/2001/4). Similarly, the UNDG Executive Committee approved special measures to recruit women candidates for resident coordinator posts (adopted by CCPOQ in June 2000). At present, 29[23] of the 140 resident coordinators are women.

E. Regional dimensions

172. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly stressed the growing need to incorporate regional and subregional dimensions in United Nations operational activities, encouraging resident coordinators, in consultation with Governments, to secure greater involvement of United Nations regional commissions in the common country assessment and UNDAF.

173. The research in preparation for the triennial comprehensive policy review found some evidence of greater regional and subregional perspectives in the activities of United Nations organizations than previously, including in annual reports of the resident coordinator. In part, this reflects the regional aspects of globalization issues. Also, the processes related to the five-year reviews of United Nations global conferences have included attention to regional outcomes. The issues raised in the Secretary-General's 1998 report on regional cooperation and the related Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998 have somewhat increased the level of interest and relevant activities.

174. Consistent with the request of the General Assembly, the common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines adopted in 1999 included references to regional commission involvement. Regional training sessions on UNDAF familiarization in 2000 were conducted for each of the regional commissions to further stimulate their participation in common country assessments and UNDAF. Positive results are beginning to be seen.

175. The ACC guidelines on regional dimensions of the work of the United Nations system were adopted in 1999. UNDP and the regional commissions also signed a strategic compact in 2000 to strengthen their policy and operational cooperation, in terms of consultations, information exchange and joint efforts.

176. A great majority of country teams believe that regional perspectives are included in the operational activities of the United Nations system. In contrast,

about 60 per cent of the country teams and several Member States declared that the United Nations regional commissions are very little involved in common country assessment and UNDAF preparations. Most agree that possible constraints preventing the effective addressing of regional dimensions in national development are insufficient funding, non-involvement of regional and subregional entities, and complications concerning national ownership of regional activities.

177. Some agencies, such as WHO, FAO, ILO and WFP, report traditionally strong regional and subregional field structures for service delivery. The work of others, such as ITU and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), is largely regional and global. Still others focus considerable effort on cross-border phenomena and their implications, for example in drug trafficking, migratory flows or the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) are examples of this approach. WFP has been taking measures for further decentralization, thereby strengthening regional and subregional offices.

178. An important concern is the strengthening of the relationships with other regional and interregional organizations (e.g., Organization of African Unity (OAU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), British Commonwealth) and encouraging them to devote more attention to particular issues. UNICEF and WFP report efforts to this end.

179. Regional commissions have also been increasingly active in engaging other entities of the United Nations system in joint or supplementary funding of certain operational activities.

180. Among the suggested steps for strengthening the relationship with the regional commissions, the following can be singled out:

(a) All resident coordinator designates should have adequate preparation in dealing with regional issues, including the role of regional commissions;

(b) Focal points on common country assessment/UNDAF and resident coordinator issues should be established and/or strengthened in the regional commissions. Likewise, all resident coordinators should have focal points for relations with the regional commissions;

(c) Resident coordinators should ensure that all common country assessments and UNDAFs include appropriate consideration of the regional dimension, including the involvement of the regional commissions;[24]

(d) Regional commissions could become regional outposts of UNAIDS, thereby further broadening its inter-agency and multinational reach;

(e) Subregional or regional common country assessments and UNDAFs could be initiated, in alignment with regional programmes of United Nations funds, programmes regional commissions and specialized agencies;

(f) The sharing of experience and best practices in the area of regional and subregional cooperation should be increased. This could be built into the annual regional coordination meetings.

F. Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries

181. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/192, and the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/20 of 28 July 2000, both urged the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify efforts to mainstream the modality of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries (TCDC/ECDC) into their operational activities. During the period under review, according to recent reports (for more information on mainstreaming TCDC, see TCDC/12/1, TCDC/12/2 and TCDC/12/3) by the UNDP Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system remained important agents for promoting and catalyzing technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, within their respective areas of competence.

182. All the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system have established TCDC focal points. Many of them have formulated new policy instruments to mainstream TCDC in accordance with the revised guidelines on TCDC[25] and pilot common results indicators.[26] Some made a conscious effort to develop and support innovative and distinctive TCDC programmes to ensure sustainability and greater impact, such as the FAO Special Programme for Food Security or the International Trade Centre South-South Trade Promotion Programme. Most of the TCDC activities catalyzed by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, were carried out at the subregional, regional and interregional levels. Knowledge networking and support to centres of excellence seemed to be the preferred means used by most organizations to build capacity, share best practices and expertise and conduct joint research and dialogue, to address either sectoral or broad issues of concern to a large number of developing countries, such as trade, intellectual property rights, population, postal services and HIV/AIDS.

183. UNDP remained the major provider of support to TCDC through its global, interregional, regional and country programmes. Most of its regional programmes were TCDC initiatives. The fact that over 50 per cent of the country cooperation frameworks referred to the TCDC modality indicate that TCDC has been increasingly used in UNDP programming. Furthermore, South-South cooperation was considered to be one of the priorities in the Administrator's business plan for 2000-2003.

Notes

[1] As of 15 August 2001.

[2] See, for example, General Assembly resolution 55/43, para. 7.

[3] See the statement made by the Secretary-General at a UNDP high-level ministerial meeting on the future of development assistance, New York, 11 September 2000.

[4] Information as of 26 July 2001. Source: United Nations Development Group Office.

[5] See E/CN.3/2001/16.

[6] As part of the ongoing reform of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, a new high-level committee on programme, superseding CCPOQ, and a high-level committee on management were created.

[7] A number of guidelines have been adopted by CCPOQ, such as a guidance note for the resident coordinator system on field-level follow-up to global conferences (1998), common country assessment guidelines (1998), guidelines on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (1999) and United Nations Development Framework guidelines (1999).

[8] Ghana, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Nepal and Philippines.

[9] Madagascar and Romania.

[10] Other areas where harmonization may be feasible include contractual modalities, recruitment procedures, insurance and performance assessment methods.

[11] Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. The number of agencies involved in harmonization efforts varies from country to country. For example, in Zimbabwe, harmonization efforts involved all United Nations agencies. In Myanmar, harmonization efforts involved UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

[12] The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has approximately 3,000 national project personnel. UNDP estimates that the number of its national project personnel may be as high as 30,000. WHO does not have a national project personnel arrangement as such, although national personnel may be contracted under arrangements that fall broadly within the agreed definition.

[13] The UNDP Administrator is designated by the Secretary-General to manage and fund the resident coordinator system. It is the Administrator who makes the final submission of a resident coordinator nomination to the Secretary-General.

[14] Currently, there are 130 resident coordinators.

[15] The 180-degree appraisal refers to performance feedback to the United Nations resident coordinators by the members of the country team and performance feedback to the members of the United Nations country team by the resident coordinators. It is a feedback exercise of peers and by peers.

[16] These are in addition to the existing Intranet and Internet sites of the United Nations and all ACC member organizations, as well as the CCPOQ web site, which features guidelines, sessional reports and papers and other related information; see E/2000/46/Add.1, paras. 60 and 61.

[17] See *United Nations, Capacity-Building Supported by the United Nations: Some Evaluations and Some Lessons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 99.II.A.4).

[18] See E/1998/61.

[19] The General Assembly noted, in this context, the activities of United Nations funds and programmes aimed at providing technical assistance to recipient countries, in response to their national economic and social needs and priorities, among them poverty eradication, the promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences, and stressed the need for those activities to be undertaken at the request of interested recipient Governments, strictly within the respective mandates of United Nations funds and programmes, which should receive increased contributions from donor countries.

[20] Some 99 per cent of the resident coordinators and 91 per cent of the recipient countries and all donors who have responded agree that United Nations activities have targeted women and girls living in poverty.

[21] WomenWatch has a dedicated section which provides information on and links to available training materials (www.col.org/GenderResources).

[22] Resources that already exist include the "good practice compendium" (www.unifem.org/goodpractices), which is an inter-agency effort, and WomenWatch (www.un.org/womenwatch), as maintained by the Division for the Advancement of Women and sponsored by several other agencies.

[23] This number includes 26 incumbent women resident coordinators and 3 designates. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and UNFPA also have their own web sites on good practices.

[24] UNDG, in consultation with the regional commissions, is taking measures to increase progress in this area, encouraging all resident coordinators to involve regional commissions in participating in the common country assessment and UNDAF from the outset.

[25] The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1998/284 of 31 July 1998, took note of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the revised guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning technical cooperation among developing countries.

[26] For the pilot common results indicators, see TCDC/12/3, annex.